



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

March 8, 2005

News Release

OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000

New England accounts for more than 155 arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators

BOSTON – More than 155 of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in New England.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that arrests in the 20-month long effort have surpassed 5,000. Among those individuals arrested in New England are:

Erasmo Lepore, an Italian national, pleaded guilty to illegally re-entering the United States after having been deported following a Massachusetts conviction for indecent assault and battery on a person 14 or older. Prior to that conviction, Lepore was convicted of indecent assault and battery on a child under the age of 14, and was convicted on two separate occasions for open and gross lewdness and lascivious behavior. (Massachusetts)

Milton Aguiriano, a Honduran national, was convicted of first-degree child molestation in Providence Superior Court in 2003. Aguiriano was sentenced to twenty-year and is currently in removal proceedings before the Immigration Court. (Rhode Island)

Abiba Kanzayire and Hussein Mutungirehe, both Rwandan nationals, were sentenced on child smuggling convictions. Kanzayire pleaded guilty to encouraging multiple children to come to the United States illegally, and bringing an alien child into the United States. Mutungirehe pleaded guilty to harboring and transporting illegal immigrant children. Kanzayire was sentenced to time served and agreed to be deported. Mutungirehe was sentenced to a six-months in prison and faces removal from the United States. (Connecticut)

Gerald Bailey pleaded guilty in January 2005 to possession of child pornography. The investigation into Bailey began when two students at the Holbrook Elementary School reported to the principal that they had seen Bailey looking at pornographic images on a school computer in a classroom. Bailey is one of two former teachers in Holden, ME who have pleaded guilty to child pornography crimes. Chris Reardon, another Holden teacher, was sentenced in February 2005 to 36 months in prison for transporting child pornography. (Maine)

Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative aimed at those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable.

"Sexual predators who prey on the innocent and vulnerable members of our society - our children - will not go unpunished," said Robin M. Avers, Special Agent-in-Charge of ICE's New England office. "Whether it is a matter of a U.S. citizen trading in an industry dedicated to sexually exploiting children, or a foreign national here in the U.S. facing deportation for committing a crime against a child, ICE is committed to identifying, arresting, and where possible, removing these predators who are a public safety threat to New England communities."

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE's mission to find and deport illegal aliens -- particularly those with criminal records, and reflects the agency's traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

Foreign National Child Predators: More than 85 percent of the arrests in Operation Predator involve foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported.

International Child Sex Tourists: Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE's attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents have made 14 arrests, including the first 12 arrests, under the child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act.

Human Smuggling & Trafficking of Children: The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger.

Internet Child Pornography: Drawing on ICE's cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation's virtual borders. One massive investigation has resulted in more than 1,200 arrests worldwide and marks the first time the government has gone after the financial side of child pornography. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at www.ice.gov. ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.